CHINESE CARVINGS

IN JADE, ROCK
CRYSTAL, AMBER,
CORAL AND OTHER
SEMI-PRECIOUS
STONES

FAR EAST SHOP
JOHN WANAMAKER
NEW YORK, PHILADELPHIA

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It is well to remember that it is a matter of but a few years at most before such things will be almost unattainable in any of the world's treasure-markets. Even today it is in a few only of the great private collections, and in the Museums, that one will see pieces of equal importance.

DATES OF CHINESE DYNASTIES

Shang	B. C. 1766-1122
Chou	B. C. 1122-255
Han	B. C. 206-A. D. 220
Wei	A. D. 220-264
T'ang	A. D. 618-906
Sung	A. D. 960-1279
Yuan (Mongol)	A. D. 1280-1368
Ming	A. D. 1369-1644
Ch'ing (Manchu)	A. D. 1644-1912

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"Ch'ing, the chief carpenter, was carving wood into a stand for hanging musical instruments. When finished, the work appeared to those who saw it as though of supernatural execution.

"And the Prince of Lu asked him, saying, 'What mystery is there in your art?'

" 'No mystery, your Highness,' replied Ch'ing, and yet there is something. When I am about to make such a stand I guard against any diminution of my vital power. I first reduce my mind to absolute quiescence. Three days in this condition, and I become oblivious of any reward to be gained. Five days and I become oblivious of any fame to be acquired. Seven days and I become unconscious of my four limbs and my physical frame.

" 'Then, with no thought of the Court present to my mind, my skill becomes concentrated, and all disturbing elements from without are gone. I enter some mountain forest. I search for a suitable tree. It contains the form required; which is afterward elaborated. I see the stand in my mind's eye, and then set to work. Otherwise there is nothing. I bring my own natural capacity into relation with that of the wood. What was suspected to be of supernatural execution in my work was due solely to this.' "

From CHUANG TZU,
Translated by H. Giles.

"These words, written three or four centuries before our era, are still alive with vital truth. No work has such survival power as that done under like conditions."

A COLLECTION OF CHINESE CARVINGS

In Jade, Rock Crystal, Amber, Coral and Other Semi-Precious Stones

China, the land of teeming millions, of flowers and deserts, of splendors and famines, of strange beliefs and practical philosophy, of the long patience and the unparalleled artist-craftsmen, is today in a state of seething unrest, with wars and rumors of wars. Change and uncertainty are on every hand, and the difficulties for foreign travellers are many and serious. But also the rewards for the seeker after treasure were never so great.

This collection of some of the finest carvings—in all probability—ever brought out of China, is the result of years of search by Wanamaker representatives, and of a final journey by one of them, a journey covering five months and twenty thousand miles, and full of dangers and adventure. Under ordinary circumstances it would be almost impossible even to see such objects and entirely impossible to acquire them. War conditions, however, have compelled people of high rank as well as merchants to turn their most valued possessions as rapidly as possible into money.

Every piece exhibited has been wrought by the foot-turned wheel, the little hammer, and the dropping water, and with a patience almost beyond belief. To the Chinese craftsman a lifetime of labor on a single piece is nothing; the object of his toil is all.

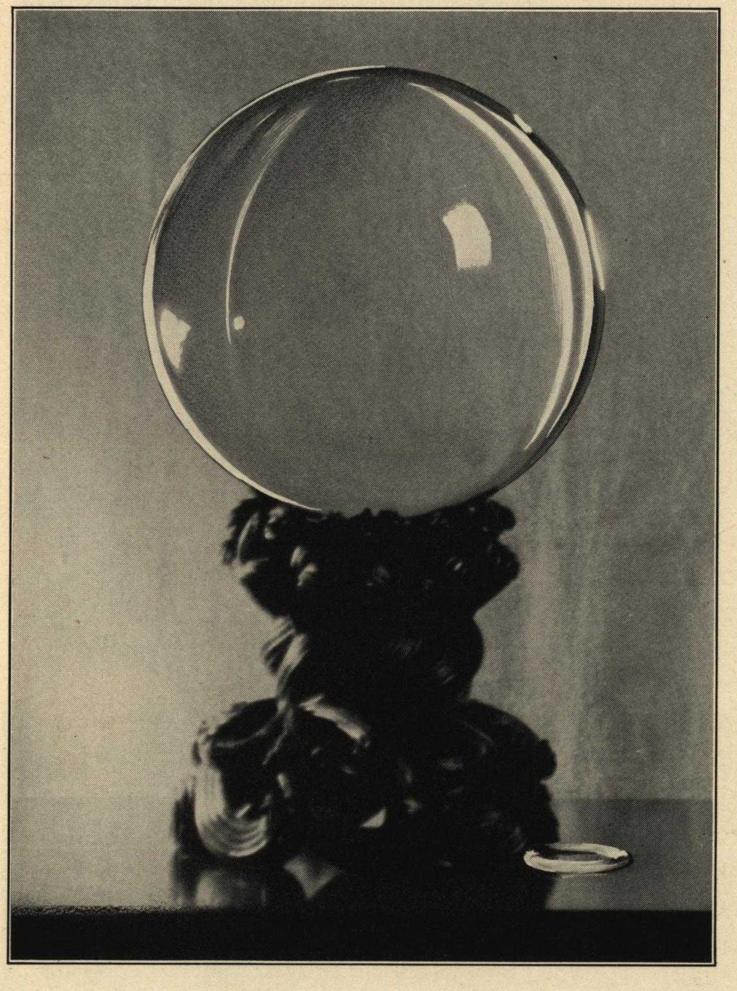
ROCK CRYSTAL

The most remarkable feature of the collection is the magnificent crystal sphere, the Dowager Empress. Originally a treasure of the Imperial Palace in Pekin, it had wandered for a decade or more through the country, heard of here and there, always eagerly sought, but continually lost sight of, until at last this summer it appeared in Shanghai and was acquired by the Wanamaker Store. Nothing in the Albert and Victoria Museum or the Kensington Museum in London, nothing in the Louvre, equals it in perfection and size.

It is ten inches in diameter, silver white and utterly without flaw.

"The pearl of purity," the Chinese call rock crystal, "the Imperial Dragon's most precious gift," Again to them it is "the perfect jewel," recalling the splendor and immensity of space; it is also a symbol of perseverance, patience and purity.

Perhaps the flawlessness which gives the strange unsubstantial look to these crystal spheres is the secret of their hold upon the hearts of those devoted to beauty—the Dowager Empress, a ball of purest quartz, weighing considerably over a hundred pounds, appears like a single glorious bubble—one literally expects to see it quiver and float away as one gazes.

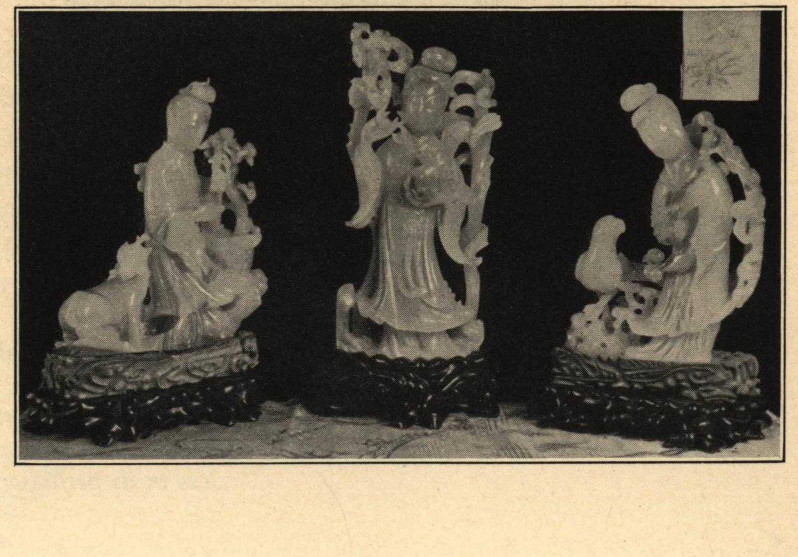


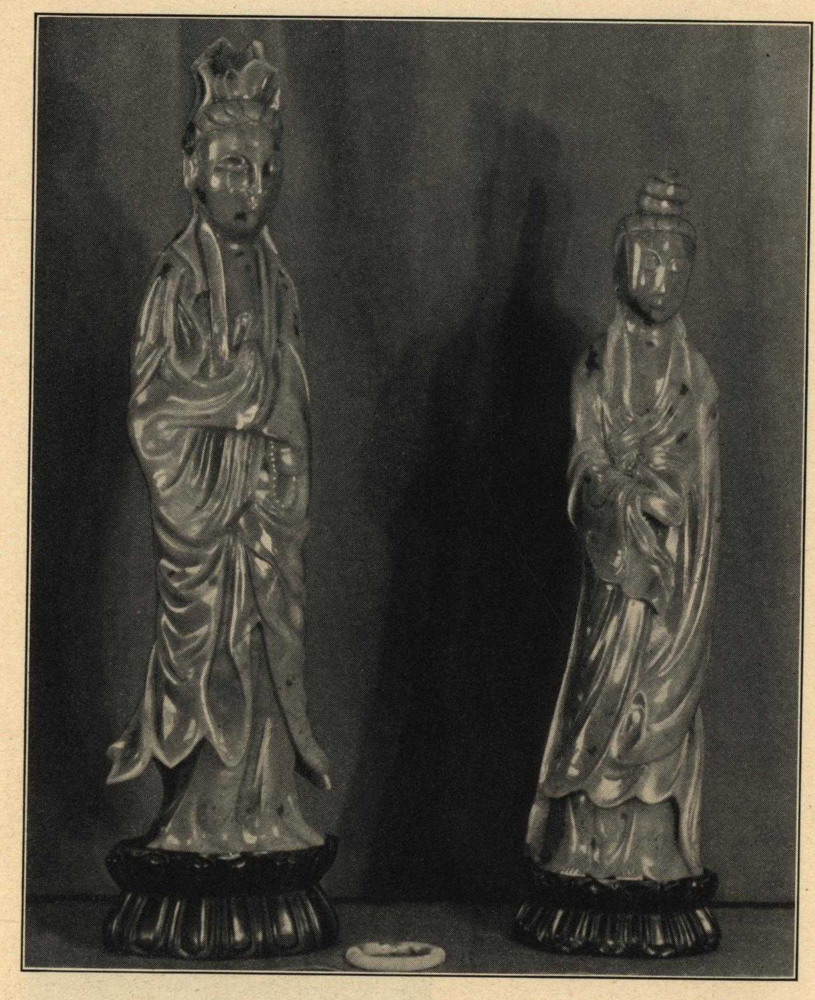
The crystal sphere Dowager Empress, ten inches in diameter, silver-white and matchless in its perfection.

JADE

The jade carvings are almost equally impressive. The Western world knows a little of the Chinese feeling for jade—but only a little. To the Oriental it is "all that is supremely excellent," a thing prized for its sheer beauty quite apart from its commercial value. Jade clouded or many-colored was the most beloved in old days, since it suggested the elements of Nature, and it was this which they selected for their noble gifts; pure emerald jade was kept chiefly to be cut as gems.

The two tall jade figures of Kuan-Yin are superb examples of color and technique. Both, exquisitely clouded, show the precious rust red known as "the blood of the stone," and in both the sureness and freedom of the touch is amazing—those flowing lines, so charmingly reminiscent of the curves of a lotos bud, or of the sea-waves lapping on the sand—might have been laid in by a wet brush.





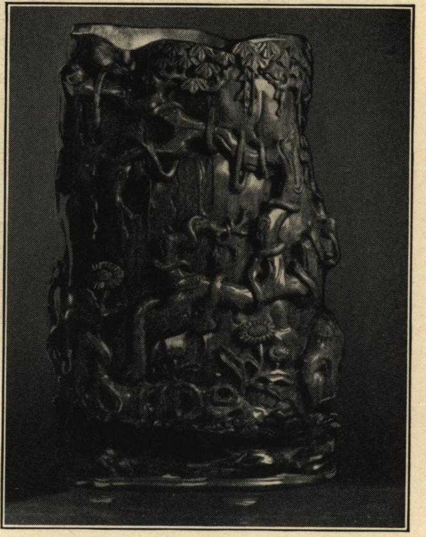
Three groups of jade, all New Year's pieces with the appropriate symbolism. The "blood of the stone" may be seen in each group.

Two Kuan-Yins of jade, probably Chien-Lung, are 26¼ and 22⅞ inches high and among the largest pieces of the kind ever brought out of China.

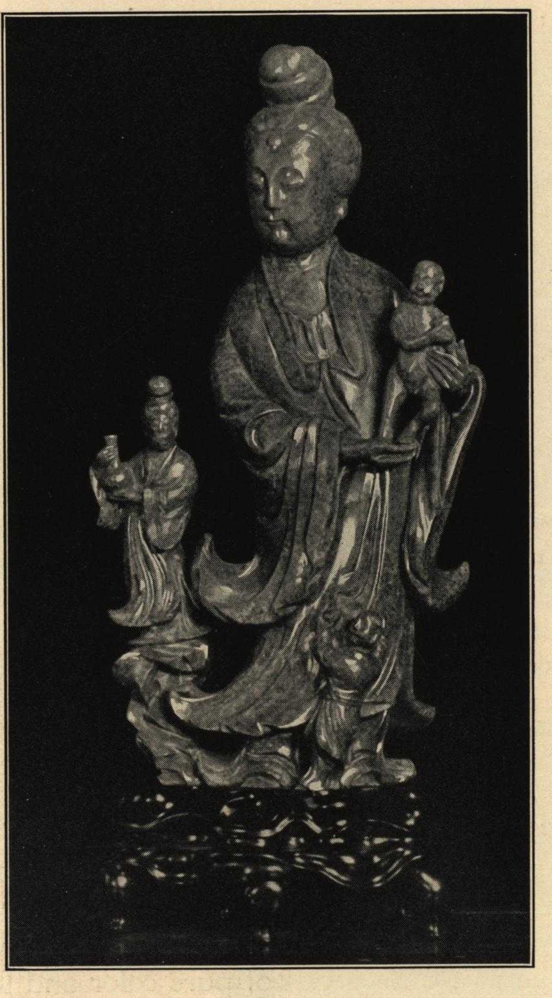
LAPIS LAZULI

Pieces like the lapis-lazuli mountain are instances of the peculiar Chinese regard for the natural state of a stone. The method of Nature was something to be not merely considered but reverenced in the treatment of the material; the more casual her mood the more possibilities the carver perceived. The accidental, the unexpected and imperfect, held for him a special appeal. This practical and serene attitude on the part of the worker may well have come from the Confucian philosophy; at any rate it is certain that it affords us today a deep satisfaction.

Other specimens of lapis lazuli, that "blue stone with little golden spots," are here in the form of a shaft of unusual size, and a Kuan-Yin. The former is in the deeper, more familiar tones of blue.



Lapis lazuli shaft, Chien-Lung, 11 inches high.



Lapis lazuli figure of Kuan-Yin with child and two small figures, 14½ inches high.

CORAL

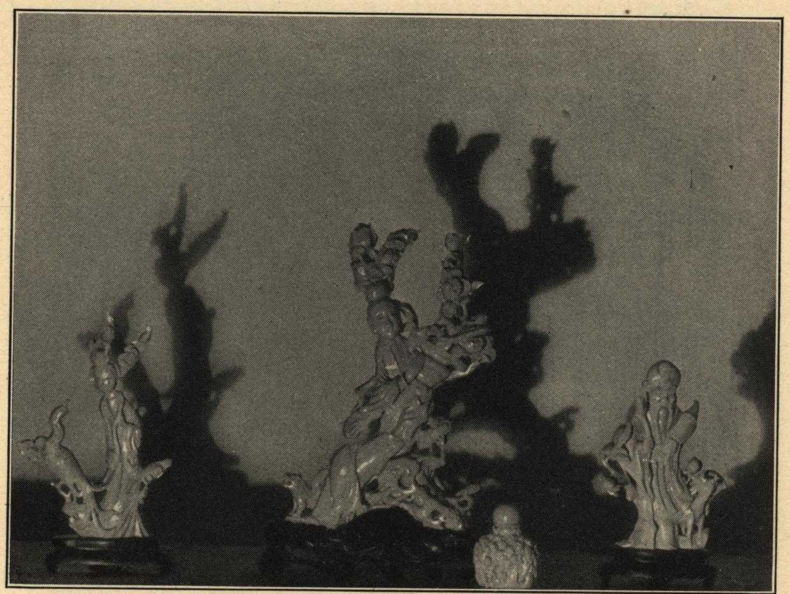
Coral for twenty centuries or more was classed among the precious stones, and a vital force was believed to animate it. Like lapis lazuli, it is more easily cut than the other substances, and lends itself accordingly to subjects of greater complexity and richness.

In all the corals on exhibition the size and vivid red color are noteworthy, uncut pieces of this character being kept ordinarily for the making of the jui or scepters reserved for mandarins, and other high dignitaries.

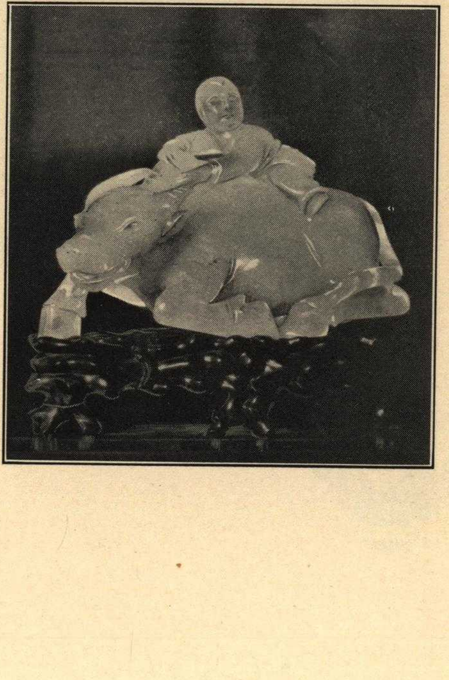
It is interesting to observe how the artist has allowed the natural branching forms of these pieces to dictate his subjects and their treatment. In the pictured groups the first shows a Kuan-Yin with phoenix; the second a large figure with basket of flowers and the third is Lao-tze, the symbol of longevity, with peach and stag.

ROSE QUARTZ

The rose quartz group of a water-buffalo and a coolie is extremely simple and massive, the two forms emerging nearly devoid of detail. The whole is remarkable for its depth of pure color and for its luminousness.



All three coral pieces are from the Palace of Pekin and of the Chien-Lung period.



A rose quartz group, Chien-Lung period, representing water-buffalo and coolie. Very luminous.

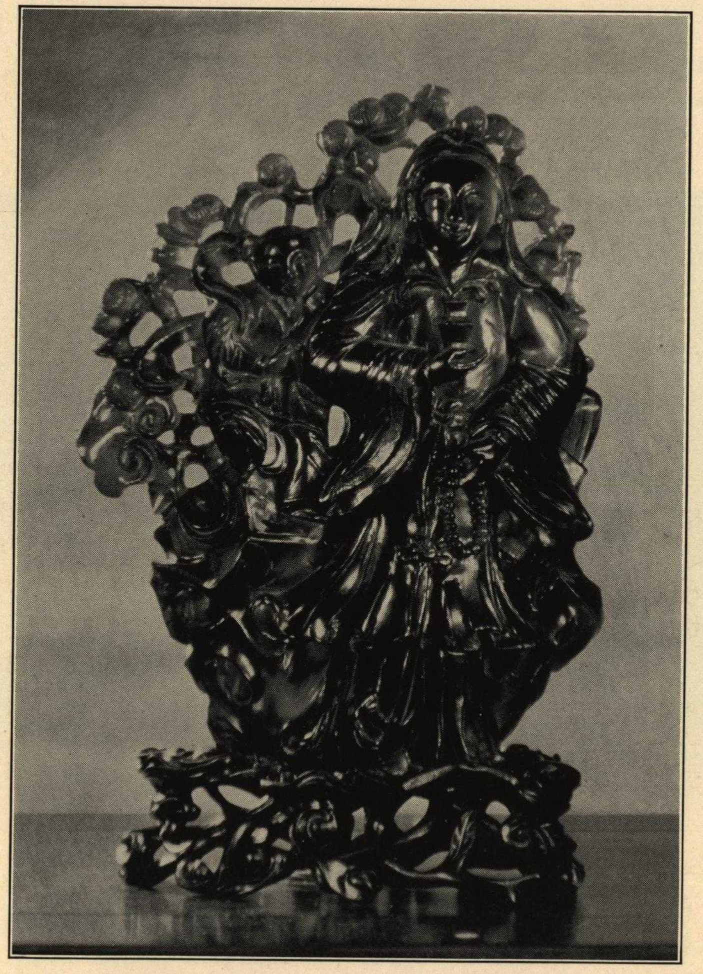
AMBER

Amber was one of the first substances to be used by man for personal decoration perhaps, because it was easily worked; and it is one of the oftenest mentioned in the works of ancient writers.

Homer speaks of a golden necklace "set with amber beads that glowed as if with sunshine," and for Nicias it was the very spirit of the rays of the setting sun. When Phaethon, in Greek mythology, was hurled by the lightning of Jove into the Eridanus river, his sisters shed tears which turned into amber; and the Greek word for amber is one of the names of the sun-god. Thales of Miletus, 600 B. C., noticed that when rubbed this substance attracted light bodies, which simple little observation was the beginning of modern electricity. Amber has been found in the graves of Mycenae and it was immensely popular in the Roman world.

Its glowing and beautiful yellows have doubtless had much to do with this popularity, ranging as they do from the palest honey color to the tone known as old or red, which is full of fire.

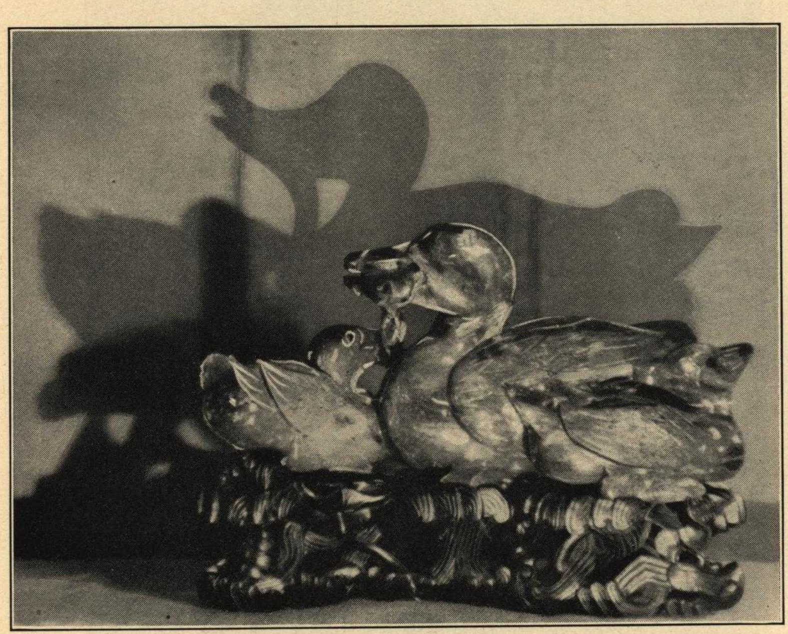
In the carvings on exhibition there will be observed a great wealth of detail and much luminosity. Their color is very dark.



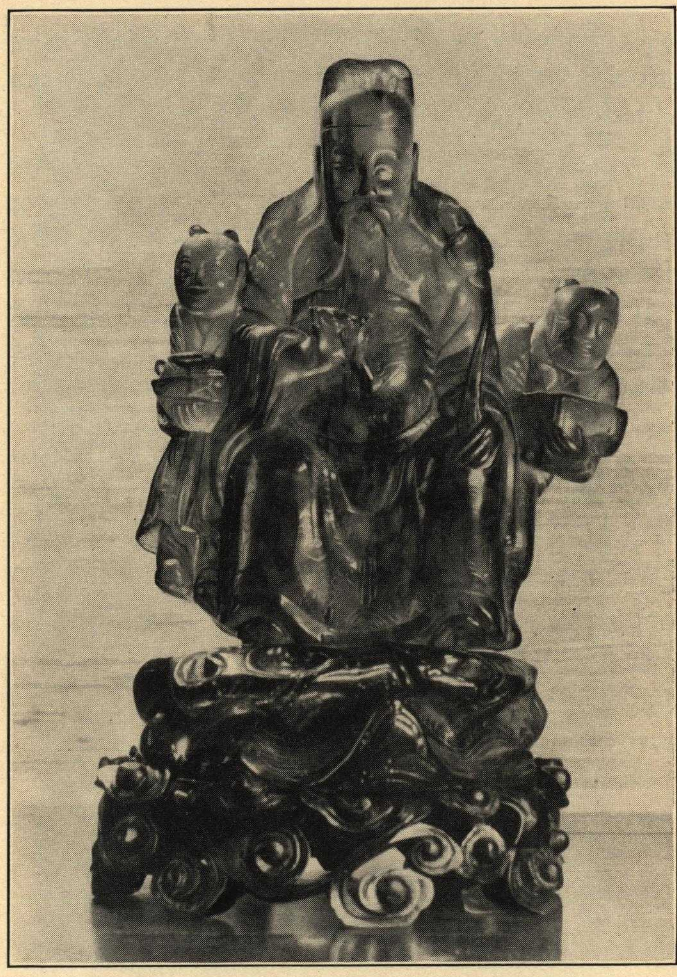
Amber piece of the Ming period. A Kuan-Yin with child and rosary, 8½ inches high.

AGATE

The agate group of ducks—full of vitality and spontaneousness—shows how readily this vari-colored stone lends itself to artistic treatment.



Agate piece noteworthy for size and coloring. The subject is a mother duck with two little ones.

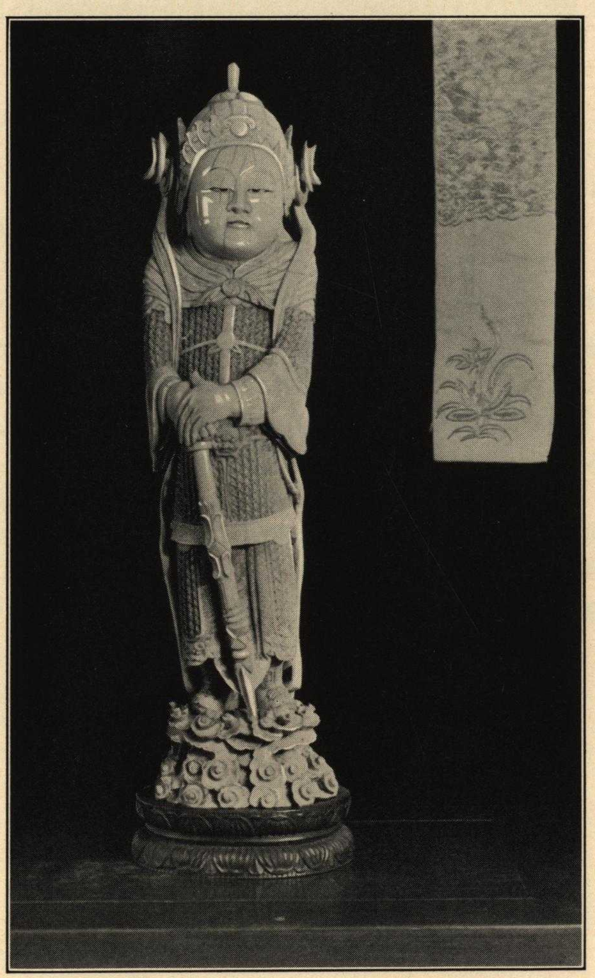


Amber piece of the Ming period, representing an Emperor with two attendants, 8½ inches high.

IVORY

One of the most exquisite objects in the entire collection is the Ming soldier carved in ivory, from the Museum of the Forbidden City.

He wears the clothes and armor of the Imperial Household's guards, and the detail of both is wrought with a precision and stiffness almost archaic. All the life of the figure is in the little face, so deliciously and flatly modelled, so altogether masterly. Nothing could be more subtle, more suave and humorous, than the look it wears.



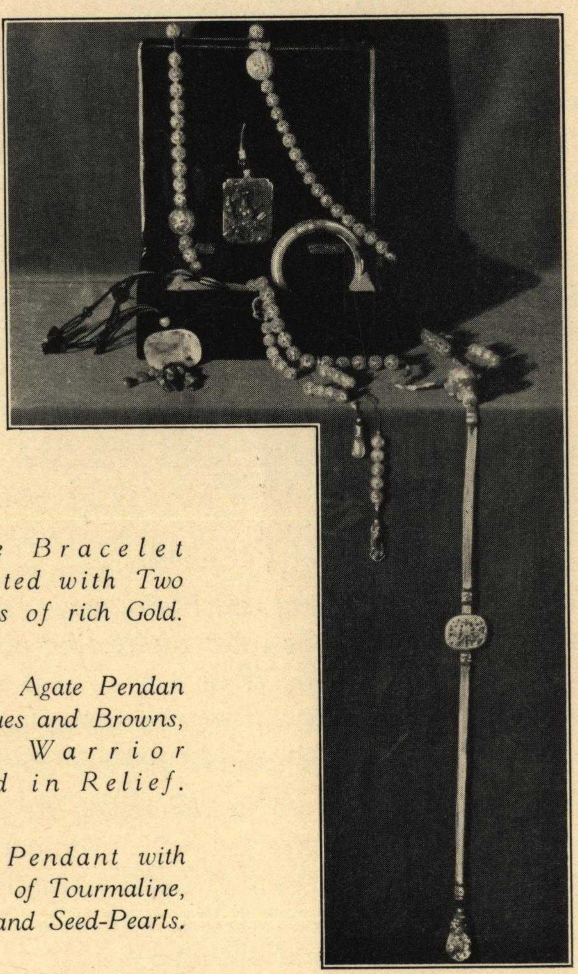
Charming ivory figure of the Ming period —a soldier from the Museum of the Forbidden City. He wears the armor of the guards of the Palace of the Imperial Household.

OTHER TREASURES IN THE FAR EAST SHOP

Personal Ornaments

At the head of the list, of course, are the ornaments of jade—the necklaces and pendants, earrings and bracelets, in all the wonderful variations of this stone. One superb necklace is of small emerald green beads; while another shows the evasive charm of white jade minutely carved.

Here too are the ornaments of amber, from the pale honey-colored to the deepest red; of the shining rock crystal, alone or in combination with other stones; of agate in its many delicate shades and finely carved; of the variously colored tourmalines, the dark green malachite, and the finest lapis lazuli. One delightful little necklace is of Burmese rubies—each glowing in its own rose light like a living thing.



Jade Bracelet Mounted with Two Bands of rich Gold.

Oblong Agate Pendan in Blues and Browns, with Warrior carved in Relief.

Jade Pendant with Tassel of Tourmaline, Jade and Seed-Pearls.

Old Mandarin Chain, in its Original State, Very Long, of Beautiful Colored Coral, Mounted with Carved Jade Beads and Fine Pendant Ends of Aquamarines, Tourmalines and Seed Pearls.

Embroideries

Both old and modern embroideries and hangings are here—among the first a Chien-Lung tapestry in marvellous blues; and some cut velvet hangings of the same period. Other hangings again are of the Imperial yellow, that divine hue which echoes certain tones of gold, certain yellows of summer sunsets, and perhaps the inside of a crocus bloom. All such needlework is wrought with infinite painstaking in the daring and subtle harmonies characteristic of the East. Here too, is a Delhi hanging from India. Many other lovely old bits are hidden away in the great Chinese chests.

Pottery and Porcelain

A few examples of Tang and Han pottery and a Ming shrine are among the most interesting objects in this group. The shrine is of carved teakwood, with inlay of jade, enamel, cinnabar lacquer and porcelain. Above it are the gold bronze dragons.

Among the old vases are flambé, sang de boeuf and clair de lune porcelains in bottle, trumpet and gallipot shapes. Also there are graceful white figures of old Fuchien porcelain. A Ming roof tile of turquoise blue is a thing of enchanting color.

Lacquer and Teakwood

The lacquered furniture is from Kashmir, India, and includes console tables, bowls, candle-sticks, boxes, mirror frames and writing sets. In every instance the rich, close decoration betrays the Persian influence, but the color schemes vary.

Teakwood from China includes straight and arm chairs, tables and console tables, high and low tabourets. Many have insets of Honan marble.

Snuff Bottles

Hundreds of these delightful small objects of art are here, picked up all over the East. They are made of porcelain and cameo glass, as well as semi-precious substances, such as turquoise, agate, jade, carnelian, and chalcedony.

Rare Gifts

The choice of gifts in the Far East Shop for the particular person is wide, including such fine things as the fore-going, and many others of less importance.

The oldest form of the ideograph for "king" is said to be the symbol for a string of jade beads, used to this day in China as insignia of rank and power. Oddly enough, certain qualities of jade were chosen for musical instruments, and Confucius was fond of playing on such "musical stones."

Egyptian carved wood boat
found at Assiout Egypt
length 25 in width 5" height 11
Anderson Gallery
Mar 6th 1925